



Colorado Scientific Society Lecture Announcement

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026, Calvary Church, Golden

Kaiparowits Fm., Southern Utah

Up a River with Big Paddles: a Freshwater "Sea Turtle" from the Cretaceous of Southern Utah

Dr. Josh Lively, Curator of Paleontology, Utah State University Eastern Prehistoric Museum

Lecture Highlights:

Decades of work in the Upper Cretaceous Kaiparowits Formation site has produced a rich fossil assemblage that includes representatives of the entire ecosystem, from plants to dinosaurs. Turtle fossils are particularly abundant and diverse, with at least 16 species being discovered so far. New finds include a massive turtle discovered in a tyrannosaur bonebed in the Kaiparowits Formation including three individuals of varying sizes. A costal bone from one shell is over 450 mm wide, supporting a total shell width of well over 1 m for the largest individual. This new species shares a number of features with *Terlinguachelys* from the Cretaceous of West Texas, a member of the sea turtle clade Protostegidae. Dr. Lively will present anatomical evidence and geochemical data that support this new species as a fully freshwater protostegid, making this the first freshwater "sea turtle" in the >100 million year evolutionary history of the group.



ARTIST DEPICTION OF THE TURTLE *ARVINACHELYS GOLDENI* AS IT WOULD HAVE APPEARED IN LIFE 76 MA IN SOUTHERN UTAH

Speaker Background:

Dr. Josh Lively is a geoscientist and evolutionary biologist studying ecosystems of the Late Cretaceous. He uses a combination of vertebrate paleontology, phylogenetics, stratigraphy, sedimentology, and studies of modern osteology to unlock the pattern and process of evolution in the context of changing environments. His research has focused on ancient freshwater turtles and mosasaurs. He has made discoveries both in museum collections and in the badlands of the Intermountain West and beyond. He is currently Curator of Paleontology at the Utah State University Eastern Prehistoric Museum in Price, Utah.



Education: MS (2013): Univ. of Utah; PhD: Univ. of Texas at Austin (2019)

Keywords: Late Cretaceous, turtle fossils, Kaiparowits fm., Protostegidae

[Meet Golden's bacon turtle, an extinct species | CNN](#)

[Bizarre pig-nose turtle once swam the prehistoric seas of Utah - CSMonitor.com](#)

